PRELIMINARY STAFF SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

Chicago Building

7 W. Madison Street

Submitted to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in November 1992
Recommended to the City Council on January 21, 1994

CITY OF CHICAGO
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
J.F. Boyle, Jr., Commissioner

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Carter jewelers
SAVINGS

CHICAGO BUILDING

7 W. Madison St.
(1904-05; Holabird & Roche, architect)

The CHICAGO BUILDING is an excellent and very visible example of the internationally recognized architectural style known as the Chicago School. Its features epitomize the style: large "Chicago windows," metal-frame construction, distinctive bays, and terra cotta cladding. Holabird & Roche, the building's designers, were instrumental in developing the Chicago School.

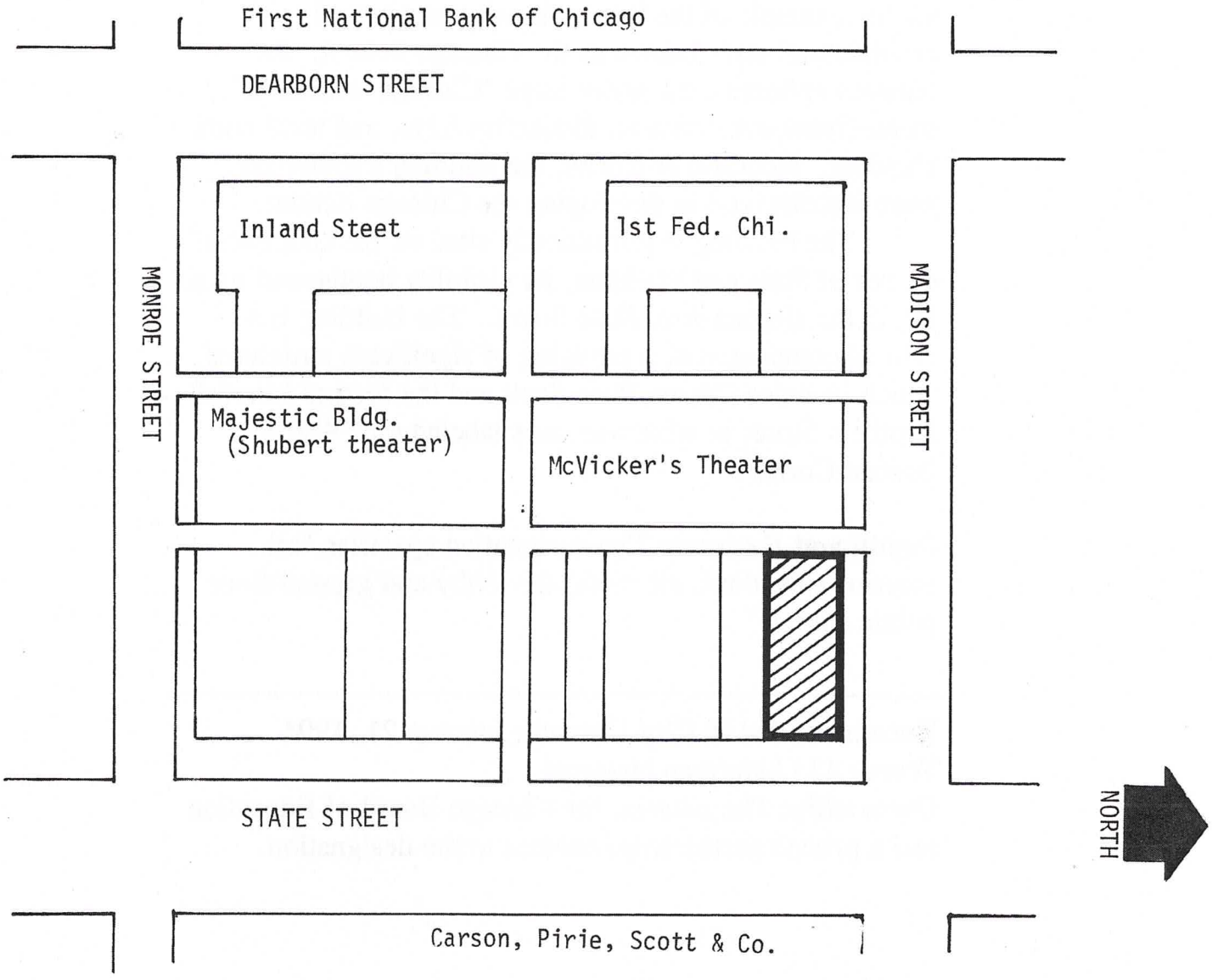
The building is prominently sited on the southwest corner of State and Madison, its visibility heightened by a jog in the alignment of State Street. The building is a critical component of a grouping of significant structures, which includes Carson Pirie Scott and the former Mandel Brothers Store, at what was once labeled the "World's Busiest Corner."

Significant Features: The designation specifies "all exterior elevations, all roofs, the lobby and ground-floor public spaces."

Recommended to City Council: January 21, 1994
Ward: 42 (Alderman Natarus)
Ownership: The owners, the Chicago Board of Education and a private partnership, consent to the designation.

CHICAGO BUILDING

Located at the southwest corner of State and Madison streets in the block bounded by State, Madison, Dearborn, and Monroe streets.



The Chicago Building

7 West Madison Street
Chicago, Illinois

Architects: Holabird and Roche

Dates of Construction: 1904-05

The prolific architectural firm of Holabird and Roche came to prominence in Chicago during the 1880s and 1890s through their design of straightforward, utilitarian commercial structures in Chicago's central business district. The Chicago Building, originally the Chicago Savings Bank Building, located at the southwest corner of State and Madison streets, exemplifies the firm's approach to the speculative office building. The Chicago Building combines elements of several Holabird and Roche buildings constructed prior to its completion in 1905, buildings in which the firm developed its approach to the new technology of steel frame construction. Their efforts in exploring the appropriate exterior expression for the tall building, along with the work of other Chicago architects, such as William Le Baron Jenney, Louis Sullivan, Dankmar Adler, Daniel Burnham, and John Root, have come to be known as the Chicago school of architecture. These architects and engineers were faced with the problem of producing the maximum amount of rentable floor space on sites in a limited and very desirable business district. They developed methods of supporting structures many floors in height. In determining how this novel building type should look, some architects modeled their designs on the shape which the skyscraper seemed to recall: the classical column, with its division into base, shaft, and capital. Other architects sought a method of covering the skeleton-framed building in forms derived from the technology itself, rather than from historical sources. In the Chicago Building, these two facets of turn-of-the-century architecture are combined: the three part division is apparent on the facade, and the terra-cotta detailing has its origins in classical forms, but neither of these characteristics is emphasized. Both are subordinate to the forthright expression of the building's internal framework which is clearly delineated by terra-cotta piers and spandrals. The Chicago Building represents the type of design at which Holabird and Roche excelled: a building which satisfied contemporary business requirements by combining the structural innovations of the period with an outward appearance of dignity and solidity, rather than extravagance or exceptional modernity.

CHICAGO BUILDING, 1904 HOLABIRD AND ROCHE

The Chicago Savings Bank Building

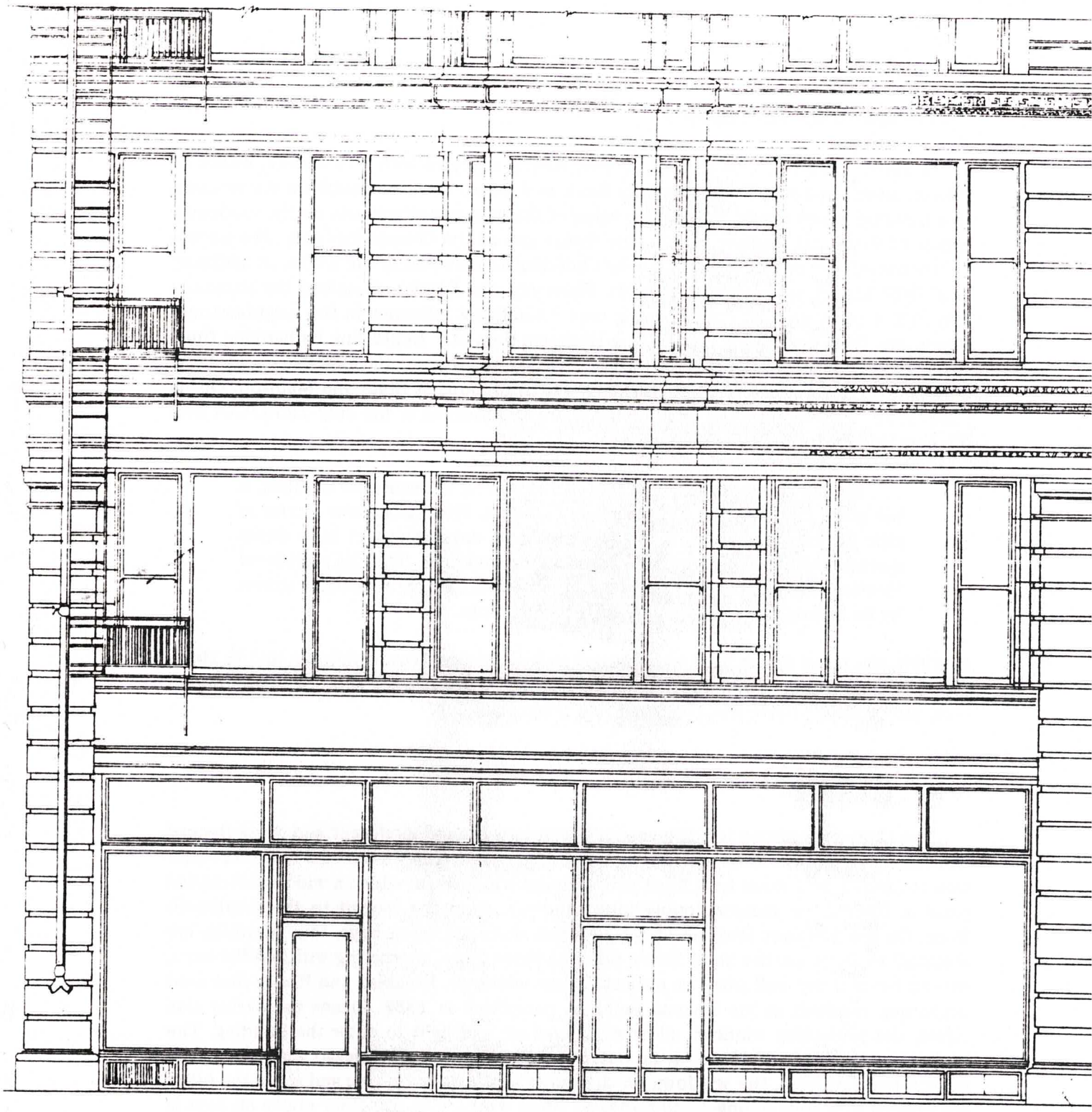
In 1902, Joseph E. Otis and his brother Ralph, together with an attorney, Walter H. Wilson, established the Chicago Savings Bank as a means to raise capital for the erection of a building which would increase the value of the underdeveloped site on the southwest corner of State and Madison streets, the future site of the Chicago Building. The lot was then occupied by the Otis Block, a low loft building constructed in the 1870s. In addition, as a 1923 history of banking in Illinois, *Financing and Empire*, described the situation, they felt a bank on that corner would be a "stabilizing influence in the neighborhood, which was then developing rapidly as a shopping district." Expanding its banking functions, the name of the organization was changed to Chicago Savings Bank and Trust Company in 1904 when the new building was being built at State and Madison. On its completion, *Inland Architect and News Record* commented in the July 1905 issue that the new Holabird and Roche building is:

> . . . unique in its simplicity of line. While lacking in decorative features, it has many architectural refinements of interest. With its sixteen stories of rich brown terra cotta it is prominent and impressive and is in direct contrast with the light colored surrounding buildings. That its prominent location, high grade construction and equipment are appreciated is shown by its immediate occupancy by high class tenants.

In 1919, the name of the bank was changed to the Chicago Trust Company, and in 1923, the bank moved into a new building at Monroe and Clark streets. With the bank's departure, the building's name was shortened to Chicago Building.

The Chicago Building

The Chicago Building is a fifteen-story structure (*Inland Architect and News Record* incorrectly called it sixteen stories) with two basements. The 48-foot State Street elevation is divided into three bays filled with Chicago windows, in which a wide fixed central pane is flanked by narrow double-hung windows, from the second to the fourteenth floor. On the 100-foot Madison Street elevation there are seven bays, four of which are identical to those on the State Street side; the other three, alternating with the flat bays, extend beyond the wall plane as projecting bay windows. Holabird and Roche first used projecting windows in the Tacoma Building, completed in 1889. Facing the darker side street, the projecting windows allow additional air and light to enter the building. The projecting windows and those in the outer two flat bays are all Chicago windows; in the central two flat bays, the windows on the upper seven floors in one and six in the other are divided into four double-hung sashes of equal width. The top floor above all bays is uniformly perforated by small rectangular windows. After the entrance on Madison Street, the top floor is the most ornamental portion of the structure. Under a projecting cornice of bands of molding and large dentils, the attic windows are set off by stringcourses above and below them, and they are separated into groups of three by ornamental squares.



STATE STREET ELEVATION

CHICAGO BUILDING

The horizontal emphasis of these elements balances the dominant verticality of the building. Closer to the ground, the second and third floors are divided by a smaller projecting cornice which is repeated in a slightly narrower form between the third and fourth floors. The full-story entrance to the building also has a projecting cornice. Windows and spandrels are set back from the piers, allowing their continuous lines to stand out. The piers of the inner bays are faced with terra cotta. The heavier corner piers are formed by narrow bands of brick, a technique Holabird and Roche first used in their 1894 Marquette Building (designated a Chicago Landmark on June 9, 1975), and used again on other buildings such as the Tribune Building, now First Federal Building, west of the Chicago Building at Madison and Dearborn streets. Across the facades of the Chicago Building, excepting the altered first-floor storefronts, details from Greek architecture are used in limited amounts, so limited by the standard of its time that the *Inland Architect* could say it was "lacking in decorative features." The dark red or reddish brown color of the surface material has darkened with accumulated dirt, but all of the original elements of the exterior, excluding the storefronts, are still intact, a condition rare among buildings dating from this period.

The entrance and interior of the Chicago Building also display a remarkable degree of intactness. Except for new elevator doors, the lobby with its marble wainscoting and marble stairs appears to be intact. The public stairs, with brass railings up to the second floor and cast iron railings up to the roof, are faced with marble. The second and third floors, originally used by the bank, have been completely remodeled, as have several other floors, but the hallways of most floors retain their marble wainscoting. Even original hardware is much in evidence, including door knobs with the initials "CSBB" worked into the design.

The Architects

William Holabird, born in New York state in 1854, and Martin Roche, born in Cleveland in 1855, began their architectural training in Chicago in the office of William Le Baron Jenney. In 1881, they formed their own office with O.C. Simonds. Two years later, Simonds left the new firm which then changed its name to Holabird and Roche. William Holabird was the more outgoing of the two men, serving as engineer and business partner for the firm. Martin Roche was chief designer although the two often shared this responsibility until the number of their commissions required the formation of a larger staff. With such buildings as the Tacoma, the Marquette, and others Holabird and Roche introduced a broad range of practical as well as structural innovations in their designs while they continued to clarify their conception of an appropriate aesthetic for the unprecedented architectural form of the highrise building. The Chicago Building combines elements of the Tacoma Building, which first brought Holabird and Roche attention as creators of tall buildings in 1889, and elements of the firm's best known design today, the Marquette Building. Unlike these two buildings, the first of which was demolished in 1929 and the latter having undergone alterations that include the loss of its cornice, the Chicago Building is remarkably intact. Their buildings of the period from 1900 to 1910 are not as

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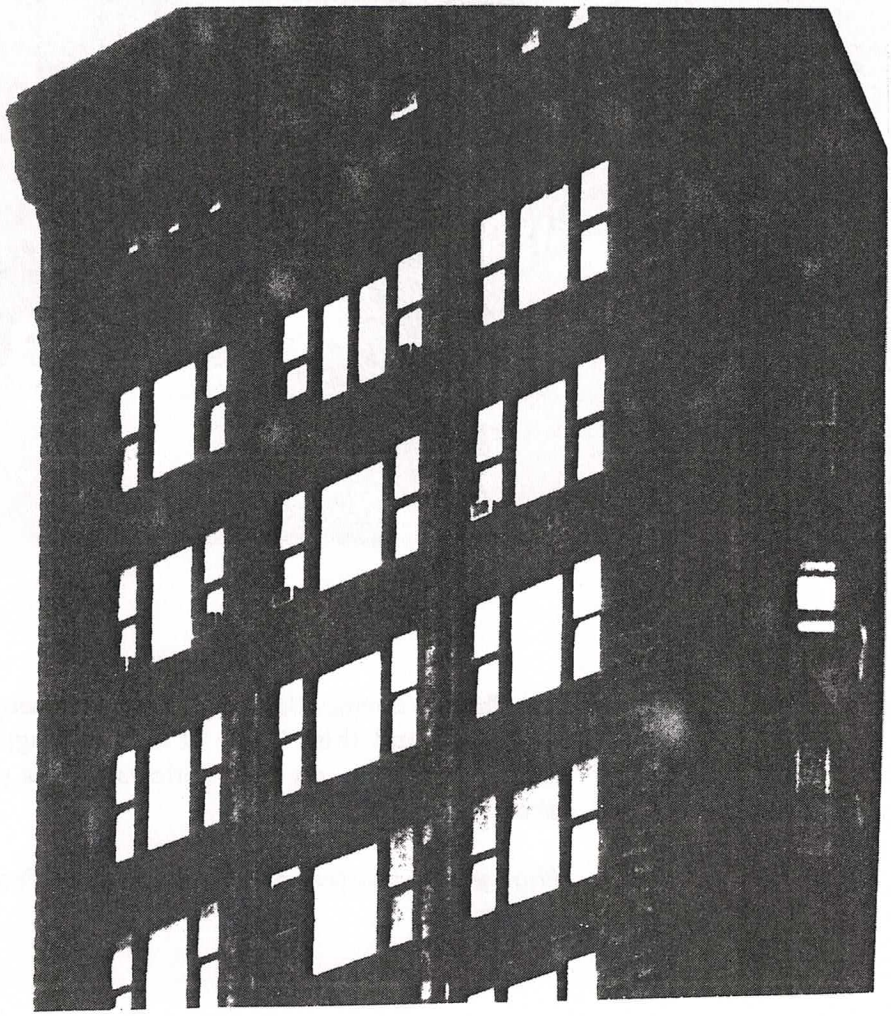
well known as their early work, but these designs form a transition between the novelty of their early work and the increasingly traditional appearance of their work after 1910.

Located at what was once known as the "world's busiest corner," at a site made particularly prominent by the narrowing of State Street south of Madison, the Chicago stands out among the surrounding structures on State Street, all of which are faced with white terra cotta. These lighter neighbors, by reflecting sunlight, provide the Chicago with a particularly bright interior. The most famous of the neighbors, directly east of the Chicago, is Carson Pirie Scott and Company, built in stages between 1899 and 1906 (designated a Chicago Landmark on November 5, 1970). The verticality of the Chicago, with its minimal classical ornament, is a vivid contrast to the horizontality of the Carson store and the complex naturalistic ornament of its ground floor. Together, the two structures epitomize the achievements of the Chicago school of architecture, but whereas the Carson store is a unique example of the genius of one architect, Louis Sullivan, the Chicago Building typifies the achievement of Holabird and Roche as definers of an approach to a new type of construction which required a new style that would fulfill and express the function of the structure without exceptional cost or expressions of individuality by its creator.



The Chicago Savings Bank and Trust Company occupied the second and third floors of the building; the bank's name can be seen on the windows in this photograph taken around 1915.

(Photograph courtesy State and Madison Property Corporation)

COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS
320 North Clark Street, Room 516, Chicago, Illinois 60610
312/744-3200
November 4, 1992

Staff Analysis of Applicable Criteria and Identification of Significant Historical and Architectural Features for the CHICAGO BUILDING

Applicable Criteria: The staff recommends that the Commission initiate the designation for the Chicago Building. In our opinion, the structure meets four of the criteria for landmark designation set forth in Chapter 2-120-620 of the Municipal Code.

CRITERION 1: ***Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.***

The Chicago Building is a member of that prominent family of Chicago school buildings by Holabird and Roche which constitute an indisputedly important part of Chicago's internationally acclaimed architectural legacy. The structure is listed in the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois' 1974 Inventory as a premier structure - that is one of "such extraordinary merit and significance as to warrant preservation in all but the most exceptional circumstances." The building is also significant for its intimate connection with the history of State Street, Chicago's premier retail thoroughfare at the turn of the century. The prosperity and vitality of State Street was recognized by the building's original developers who organized the Chicago Savings Bank in 1902. William Cross explains in his 1923 history of that financial institution:

> State Street was going through the phenomenal development as a retail shopping district. The department store idea had begun to magnetize the public mind. Five large stores of this character were within a stone's throw north and south of the site on which it was proposed to locate the Chicago Savings Bank Building. The intersection of State and Madison streets soon became known as the "busiest corner in the world." No banking institution has been located on State Street for twenty years, since the removal in 1882 of the First National Bank.

The Chicago Building fulfills a vital function in defining and preserving the scale, character, and historic context of State Street.

CRITERION 4: ***Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.***

The Chicago Building is one of a small number of buildings remaining in downtown Chicago that can be defined as classic examples of the internationally recognized Chicago school of architecture, a late nineteenth century movement that presaged the mid-20th-century development of the glass and steel skyscraper.

The Chicago Building is an excellent and mature design of the Chicago school, providing a firm visual accent at the City's most important Loop intersection. The Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois Inventory points out that the Chicago Building uniquely combines four elements used in Chicago school buildings. The first of these is a clear revelation of skeletal structure used earlier in Holabird and Roche's Tacoma (1889) and Caxton (1890) Buildings, both now destroyed. The second is the protruding bay window, here a rare surviving example of a former common variant of facade design, resembling Sullivan's use in the Chicago Stock Exchange Building (1894), now demolished. The third feature is the strengthened corners which recall Holabird and Roche's (1894) Marquette. In fact, it is the opinion of architectural historian William Westfall that in this integration of elements "only the Chicago Building can match the daring of the Marquette," which is considered Holabird and Roche's Chicago school masterpiece. Lastly, the Chicago Building exhibits the classic three-division formula for skyscrapers, established by Louis Sullivan: powerful base, repetitive office floors, great concluding cornice.

Another prominent characteristic to note is the ornamentation of the Chicago Building. Although the architects of the Chicago school eschewed historical ornament in their efforts to find a new aesthetic form for the new skyscraper during the 1880s and 1890s, they were unable to abandon all traditional details all at once. After the turn of the century, historical ornament began to gain popularity once again, and the Chicago Building is subtly detailed with classical motifs derived from Greek, Roman, or Renaissance precedents.

CRITERION 5: ***Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.***

The Chicago Building was designed by one of Chicago's most notable architectural firms. The successful and prolific partnership of Holabird and Roche was responsible for seventy-two commercial buildings in downtown Chicago from its founding in 1883 until the firm became Holabird and Root in 1928. Architectural historian Robert Bruegmann says that, "If Chicago deserves its appellation of 'America's most architectural city,' then this firm deserves a large amount of the credit."

Holabird and Roche's most notable impact on architectural history has generally been considered their their contribution to the Chicago school of architecture. Architectural historian Carl Condit summarized their achievement, saying:

> In the long period of their practice, in the number and excellence of their buildings, in the consistency and uniformity of their designs, William Holabird and Martin Roche most completely represented the purpose and achievement of the mainstream of the Chicago school.

The Chicago Building represents the type of design at which Holabird and Roche excelled: a building which satisfied contemporary business requirements by combining the structural innovations of the period with an outward appearance of dignity and solidity, rather than any display of extravagance or exceptional modernity which would be out place in a utilitarian structure. From the inception of their practice, the designs of Holabird and Roche were distinguished by the application of the most modern technological approaches, a scrupulous attention to detail, and a concern and respect for the present and future needs of the client. Writing In the July, 1976 *Inland Architect* on Holabird and Roche and its successor firm, Holabird and Root, architectural historian Robert Irving observed:

> It is the duty, delight, and often despair of the architect to make of any place a *some* place. His hand endows placelessness with a rich particularity, anchoring structure not only in time and space, but, more important, in mind. From the days of its foundation

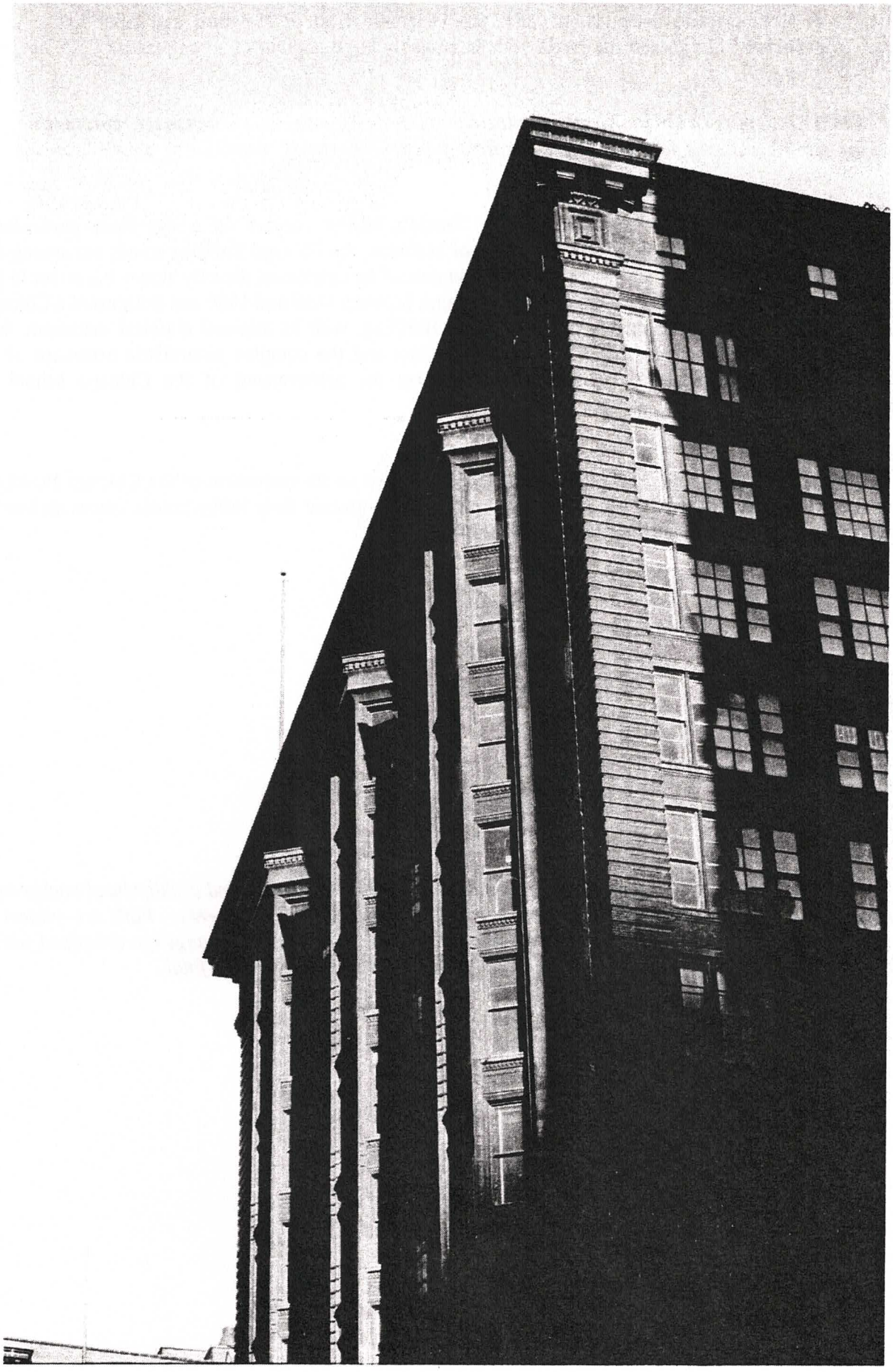
as Holabird and Simonds in 1881, the venerable firm of Holabird and Root has provided Chicago and the world with an enviably large number of some places.

CRITERION 7: ***Its unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Chicago.***

Located at what was once known as the "world's busiest corner," at a site made particularly prominent by the narrowing of State Street south of Madison, the Chicago Building stands out among the surrounding structures on State Street. The most famous of its neighbors, directly across the street to the east, is Carson Pirie Scott and Company, built in stages between 1899 and 1906 and designated a Chicago Landmark in 1970. The verticality of the Chicago Building, with its minimal classical ornament, is a vivid contrast to the horizontality of the Carson's Store and the complex naturalistic ornament of its ground floor. Together, the two structures epitomize the achievement of the Chicago school of architecture.

Significant Historical and Architectural Features: Based on its evaluation of the Chicago Building, the staff feels that all exterior elevations, all roofs, and the ground floor lobby/public spaces should be identified as significant historical and architectural features.

This staff analysis and the accompanying report summarizing the historical and architectural background of the proposed landmark should be regarded solely as preliminary documents. Both are subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation proceedings. Only language contained within the Commission's recommendation to the City Council should be regarded as final.



COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS

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